

**ANG****Bayan**

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Ka Bel: Proletarian internationalist, hero of the working class and the Filipino people

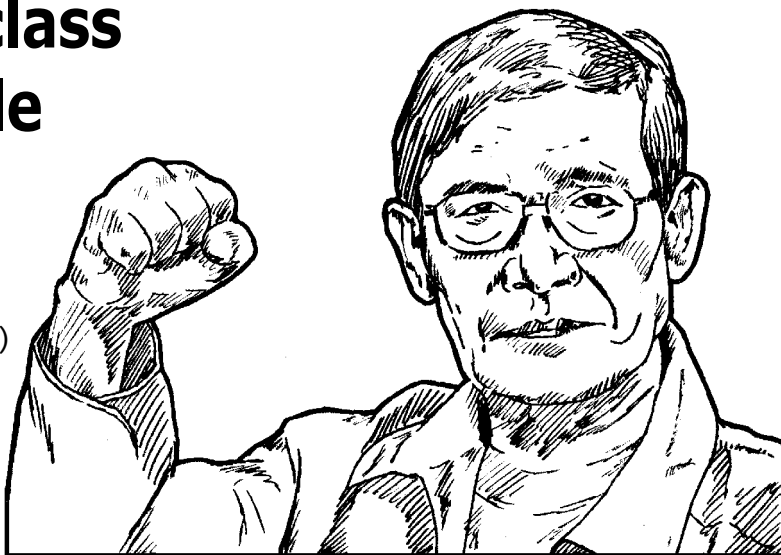
**Central Committee
Communist Party of the Philippines**

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) pays the highest tribute to Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran, a great hero of the international proletarian movement, the international anti-imperialist movement, the militant workers' movement in the Philippines, the toiling masses and the Filipino people. The entire CPP and the revolutionary movement it leads salute him as a fine and valiant proletarian leader.

His death on May 20, 2008 at the age of 75 is mourned by the oppressed. Along with the rest of the Filipino people, the CPP conveys its deepest sympathies to his bereaved wife Ka Osang and his family, friends and comrades in the struggle. The Filipino people likewise celebrate the victories they have won with Ka Bel. These triumphs provide great inspiration, strength and enthusiasm to carry on with the struggle.

In the veins of Ka Bel flowed the blood of Gat Andres Bonifacio and all the Filipino revolutionary heroes. Like our revolutionary ancestors, Ka Bel laid down his life for the cause of the toiling masses and the entire people against oppression, exploitation, plunder and bondage by foreigners, tyrants and rapacious elements. He offered his life and talents in advancing the struggle of the working class, the toiling masses, the Filipino people and the peoples of the world.

In the face of myriad sacrifices and trials, his steadfastness and enthusiasm never waned in championing the interest of his class and of the Filipino masses, in pursuit of a sovereign, just and prosperous future. Be it in the picket lines or in the halls of Congress, in the streets or in peasants' fields, in rallies or in gatherings,



Ka Bel had always been a true fighter who stood firm, daring and vigorous in waging the struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism.

At a young age, he served as a courier for the patriotic guerrilla forces fighting the Japanese occupation during the Second World War. In his youth, he farmed and eventually found work as a janitor, gasoline boy, messenger, bus driver and taxi driver.

At the age of 20, along with his fellow drivers at the Yellow Taxi Driver's Union, Ka Bel staged a strike opposing the company's unjust policies. Three workers were mercilessly killed and many others wounded when police forces brutally dismantled their picket line.

His fellow workers recognized Ka Bel's bravery, strength and militancy and elected him union president. Ka Bel was among the pioneer organizers of Amalgamated Taxi Drivers Federation, and served as its president from 1955 to 1963. During the time of intense anti-communist witchhunts and repression of the legal democratic movement in the 1950s, Ka Bel stood strong in defense of the oppressed.

From 1963-1972, Ka Bel served as vice president of the Confederation of Labor Unions of the Philippines (CLP) that he founded with Felixberto "Ka Bert" Olalia, Feliciano Reyes and Cesar Lacarra, all militant labor

leaders. He was also one of the founders of the Philippine Workers Congress, Katipunan ng Samahan ng mga Manggagawa (KASAMA), PACMAP and other workers' organizations. The workers under their leadership relentlessly fought against capitalist oppression and exploitation as well as Marcosian repressiveness until martial rule was declared.

Ka Bel stood unfazed by the reign of state terror under the US-Marcos dictatorship. He played a significant role in the formation of the Federation of Unions in Rizal and of the Philippine Nationalist Labor Organization (PANALO) that was later transformed into the Alliance of Nationalist Genuine Labor Organizations (ANGLO). These were all part of the preparations for the establishment in 1980 of a center for a genuine, fighting, anti-imperialist and militant labor movement in the Philippines—the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) or the May First Movement. Ka Bel served as the first secretary general of KMU and Ka Bert Olalia, the chairperson. In the

1980s, KMU's membership swiftly ballooned from 100,000 to half a million workers.

Marcos felt seriously threatened by the growing strength of the KMU and the labor movement it headed. He attempted to suppress the KMU. In August 1982, he ordered the arrest and detention of Ka Bel and Ka Bert. They, however, remained symbols of the genuine, patriotic and militant labor movement, and even behind bars, stood as strong symbols of the opposition against the US-Marcos dictatorship.

Ka Bel manifested his bravery and resistance to the Marcos dictatorship when he managed to escape from his military guards in November 1984. He joined the armed revolutionary movement in Central Luzon where, as a member of the New People's Army, he vigorously aroused, organized and mobilized farmers in the countryside. "Ka Anto" was his nom de guerre, drawn from the nickname of Crisanto Evangelista, a great labor leader and founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1930. Ka Bel contributed immensely in forging a stronger worker-peasant alliance in the area.

When Marcos was ousted and the political situation turned relatively favorable for the open mass movement, Ka Bel surfaced and became active once again in KMU. He took over as chairperson following the brutal killing by the military in November 1986 of Rolando "Ka Lando" Olalia.

Ka Bel was also one of the founders of Partido ng Bayan (PnB) or People's Party under which he ran for senator in 1987. Amid the repressive terror campaign and massive poll fraud by the ruling rotten politicians and the military forces, Ka Bel and the rest of the slate lost in the elections. He was also a National Council Member of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan

(BAYAN) or the New Patriotic Alliance which he chaired from 1993 to 1999.

Ka Bel remained KMU's chairperson until 2003, after which he was proclaimed KMU's Chairman Emeritus in recognition of his remarkable leadership and the inspiration he provided the workers.

As a labor leader, Ka Bel was active in supporting the workers' struggles and championing the cause of the oppressed people in the country and abroad. He was frequently invited to participate in conferences in a number of countries and international forums. He persevered in the struggles of the world proletariat and the international solidarity of oppressed peoples against imperialist plunder, bondage and oppression. Ka Bel was the first chairperson of the International League of Peoples' Struggle and its International Coordinating Committee in 2001 and became its Chairman Emeritus in 2004.

Ka Bel also served as vice president of Bayan Muna (BM) party from 2001 to 2003 and sat as one of its representatives in Congress after BM got the most number of votes in the party-list elections. Ka Bel likewise became the chairperson of Partidong Anakpawis upon its founding in 2004, and consequently became its representative in Congress from 2004 to 2007 and again from 2007 until his death.

As a representative in Congress, Ka Bel along with other progressive representatives was famed for his relentless criticism of the rotten ruling system and corrupt rule, in drafting bills and resolutions that promoted the national and democratic interests of the toiling masses and the Filipino people.

Foremost among the bills he filed was one calling for a ₱125 increase in the daily minimum wage of workers that was approved by Congress in 2007 after seven years



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of struggle. This was, however, later blocked by Gloria Arroyo and returned to Congress for the final kill by her minions.

Until his last days, Ka Bel pursued this bill especially in the face of the worsening poverty and hunger caused by the regime's pro-imperialist and antipeople economic policies. On the day he died, Ka Bel, together with the other progressive solons, were preparing to pass a resolution calling for the removal of the EVAT from electricity charges. He was likewise active in pushing for the passage of the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill and deterring the Arroyo regime's maneuver to extend the bogus and pro-landlord Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Within and outside the halls of Congress, Ka Bel was relentless and vigorous in his conviction to fight the rotten and puppet Arroyo regime. He was among the active proponents of the impeachment case against Arroyo in 2005. In October 2007, Ka Bel exposed the bribery attempt by members of Gloria Arroyo's party on him and other oppositionist solons. They were offered several millions of pesos to support the fake impeachment case that was aimed at sabotaging the filing of the genuine and new impeachment case against Arroyo. He always joined rallies and similar protests in the streets, especially for the welfare of the workers and the toiling masses.

Ka Bel was awarded the title Filipino of the Year in 2002 by the *Philippine Graphic Magazine* in recognition of his tireless support for the welfare of the majority of power consumers and other of impoverished Filipinos. The same title

was awarded to him by the *Philippines Free Press* in 2003 in his determination to take on the interest of the toiling masses. Every year, he was chosen as the Most Outstanding Congressman from 2002 until 2005. In 2006, he was included in the Congressional Hall of Fame.

In spite of the countless awards he received, Ka Bel remained an honest and humble worker, servant and people's warrior. Inside an institution of the rotten system filled with billionaires and crooks plundering the nation's wealth, Ka Bel took home not a single centavo for himself. In the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth he submitted as a Congressional representative, he declared as personal "assets" his two barong tagalog, a few other clothes, a pair of eyeglasses and cabinets. He died the poorest among all congressmen.

Because of the militancy Ka Bel and the other progressive representatives displayed in the streets, in various arenas of protests, and even within the halls of Congress, Malacañang never stopped persecuting them by filing trumped-up charges against them.

The Arroyo regime arrested Ka Bel on February 25, 2006 and detained him for one and a half years. His body was weakened by incarceration and state repression so he was transferred to hospital detention. Ka Bel was only freed after 15 months when the Supreme Court junked the baseless rebellion cases filed by the regime against him and over 50 other progressive leaders and activists.

Upon his release and return to Congress, Ka Bel did not waste a single day and continued his fight against the Arroyo regime and the rotten system and in championing

the cause of the toiling masses.

Ka Bel died in the midst of intense struggle and tireless resistance against repression, bondage and cruelty under the US-Arroyo regime and the entire semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system. In spite of his age and weakened constitution, Ka Bel remained very active in attending conferences and meetings here and abroad to strengthen the unity of the Filipino people and raise their militant consciousness and determination to end the rule of the puppet, brutal and rotten Arroyo regime.

He left us a golden legacy of militant struggle. Like his predecessors Ka Bert Olalia, Ka Lando Olalia, Ka Amado Hernandez, Ka Crisanto Evangelista and Ka Isabelo delos Reyes and other Filipino labor leaders, the memories and spirit of Crispin "Ka Bel" Betran will forever remain etched in the Filipino people's collective memory.

His story is a wellspring of inspiration. His humility and simple living, courage and determination to fight marked his unwavering service to the masses in his desire to change, end exploitation and advance the struggle for national liberation and democracy.

Like many others from the toiling masses, he died while repairing his humble abode. In life and in death, he was a model of simple and dignified living and faithfulness to principles and struggle.

With clenched fists, the hundreds of thousands of members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Red fighters of the New People's Army and the millions of revolutionary people in the cities and countryside accord the highest tribute to Ka Bel. AB

Long live the memory, aspirations and struggles of Ka Bel!

Long live the working class!

Long live the toiling masses!

Love live the Philippine revolution!

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